

**STRATEGIES TO POSITIVELY IMPACT SICK LEAVE USAGE WITHIN THE
FORT WORTH FIRE DEPARTMENT**

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

The Fort Worth Fire Department has provided sick leave in accordance with state civil service law since 1940. Chapter 143 of the State of Texas Local Government Code requires that municipalities provide firefighters with fifteen days annually of sick leave to be used for a bona fide injury or illness. Unused sick leave is accruable through out an employee's career and is available for use as described by state law. Upon retirement, an employee is entitled to be paid for up to ninety days of unused sick leave and all accrued sick leave in excess of ninety days is calculated as years of service for retirement purposes. Outside of the legally required sell back, there are no other incentive programs nor is there an option to sell or convert sick leave hours in excess of ninety days to cash. This had resulted in the department experiencing high usage of sick leave hours by employees immediately prior to retirement. Additionally there had been an increase in overall sick leave usage with an associated rise in overtime cost due to this usage.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the Fort Worth Fire Departments sick leave use history, compare it to the average usage of similar fire departments and to identify strategies to reduce sick leave usage within the Fort Worth Fire Department. The evaluative research method was employed to conduct this study. Research questions that were to be answered by this study were:

1. What is the current sick leave use experience within the Fort Worth Fire Department?
2. How does Fort Worth's usage compare with similar departments?

3. What strategies are employed by other departments to reduce sick leave usage?
4. What strategies could be employed to reduce sick leave usage within the Fort Worth Fire Department?

A literature review was conducted followed by a survey of 150 fire departments listed in the International Association of Fire Chiefs Metro Section. Results from the survey were tabulated and research was conducted to answer the stated research questions. Research indicated that Fort Worth's sick leave experience is higher than the average of fire departments of comparable size. It also identified strategies employed by other departments that may provide Fort Worth an opportunity to improve its sick leave usage.

Recommendations resulting from this research included exploring incentive programs that are mutually beneficial to the employee and the municipality, creating departmental policy that clearly defines responsibilities and ensures accountability of sick leave policies, and implementing a leave tracking system to facilitate accurate record keeping for monitoring sick leave usage.

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INTRODUCTION

Few people would argue the fact that firefighting is one of the most hazardous occupations in this country. Along with the physical demands that are placed on firefighters, most are continuously confronted with a hostile work environment that is less than conducive to continuous good health. Occupational health and safety studies have indicated this for a number of years. Unfortunately many departments fail to recognize occupational health problems as being job related. In addition to occupational illnesses, firefighters still suffer the full range of injuries and illnesses that afflict the general public.

In light of the fact that firefighters are human, subject to human ailments and injuries, most departments provide sick leave to provide employees adequate paid recovery time without penalizing the employee. Sick leave policies vary from municipality to municipality but generally are designed to allow an injured or ill employee to recover without losing his or her job or his or her pay. Employees benefit by retaining their pay during their period of convalescence and the department benefits by retaining an employee in to which the organization has invested a great deal of time and money.

The Fort Worth Fire Department, like many other departments, has provided sick leave in accordance with state civil service law since 1940. Chapter 143 of the State of Texas Local Government Code requires that municipalities provide firefighters with

fifteen days annually of sick leave to be used for a bona fide injury or illness. Unused sick leave is accruable through out an employee's career and is available for use as described by state law. Upon retirement, an employee is entitled to be paid for up to ninety days of unused sick leave. All accrued sick leave in excess of ninety days is calculated as years of service for retirement purposes according to city policy. Outside of the legally required sell back, for the City of Fort Worth there are no other incentive programs nor is there an option to sell or convert sick leave hours in excess of ninety days to cash. The problem that has resulted from this policy is that a use it or lose it attitude has developed and the department is experiencing high usage of sick leave hours by employees immediately prior to retirement. Additionally, there has been an increase in overall sick leave usage with an associated rise in overtime cost directly related to this usage.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the Fort Worth Fire Departments sick leave use history, compare it to the average usage of similar fire departments and to identify strategies that may reduce sick leave usage within the Fort Worth Fire Department. The evaluative research method is employed to conduct this study. The research questions to be answered by this study are:

1. What is the current sick leave use experience within the Fort Worth Fire Department?
2. How does Fort Worth's usage compare with similar departments?
3. What strategies are employed by other departments to reduce sick leave use?
4. What strategies could be employed to reduce sick leave use within the Fort Worth Fire Department?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Fort Worth encompasses 296 square miles of north central Texas and is populated by 490,00 residents. Fire and emergency medical service for the city is provided by the Fort Worth Fire Department. Additionally the department is responsible for the city's emergency management function, fire prevention and education programs, arson investigation, bomb disposal, hazardous material response, technical rescue, and emergency marine response. The Fire Department is staffed with 715 uniformed personnel operating 37 fire stations.

In 1940 the citizens of Fort Worth voted to place the Fort Worth Fire Department under the auspices of the state civil service law now known as Chapter 143 of the State of Texas Local Government Code. This law requires, among other things, that the city provide its uniformed firefighters with fifteen sick leave days annually to be used for a bonifide injury or illness. These days are to be used only for a bonified injury or illness and are subject to review by the Fire Chief. Sick leave days not utilized in the year earned are allowed to accrue from year to year and are available to be used in accordance with the sick leave policy established by the municipality. Upon retirement, the law mandates that the municipality must pay an employee up to ninety days of accumulated sick leave at the employees' current rate of pay. The law also allows the municipality the option of adopting policy that would pay for more than ninety days of accumulated sick leave but the City of Fort Worth has not opted to pay for sick leave beyond the ninety days as prescribed by law.

In the late 1980's and early 1990's, the Fort Worth economy took a down turn that resulted in cut backs within the fire department. As a result of this down turn, city management began to scrutinize departmental budgets and policies in an attempt to identify waste and areas where more efficiency could be gained. One glaring issue that city management identified as a problem area within the fire department was the departments sick leave use and the resulting impact that it had on the departments overtime budget (Appendix A). Of particular interest was the apparent trend of retirement aged employees towards using all accrued sick leave on the books except for the ninety days that are converted to cash in compliance with state law. Sick leave records indicated that a growing number of employees were using sick leave down to ninety days immediately preceding retirement. Another associated problem was the apparent trend by non-retirement aged employees to use a disproportionate number of sick days on weekends and holidays. In an attempt to reduce sick leave use the City of Fort Worth established a policy in 1994 that allowed employees the opportunity to sell back vacation days annually based on the number of sick leave days used in that particular year (Appendix B). This policy reduced sick leave use by fourteen percent but overall use remained high.

Up to this point the Fort Worth Fire Departments policy on sick leave use only required an employee to report a non-duty related injury or illness to his or her immediate supervisor. The supervisor in return, would report the absence to his or her battalion chief. The absent employee would then be replaced by a vacation relief person or an off duty firefighter would be hired back at time and a half to cover the vacancy. The sick

leave policy did not require documentation of the illness from the employee unless the employee had used ninety-six hours or more within that calendar year. If the employee was absent for two or more consecutive shifts the supervisor could request that the employee provide a doctors release upon returning to duty. However, this policy was very seldom used. According to policy, employees who were using sick leave in excess of 240 hours were required to provide a physicians documentation after every doctors visit and at least every thirty days. As with other sick leave policies, this policy was not being enforced.

Excessive overtime cost, policy limitations and no real effort to enforce the policy that was in place has resulted in a critical report (Appendix C) being filed with the City Manager by the Director of Human Resources. As a result of this report the fire department has been mandated to correct its sick leave problem. As an interim measure, in May of 1997, the department revised its sick leave policy tying sick leave use to an employee's ability to be eligible to work overtime (Appendix D).

Correcting the sick leave use pattern within the Fort Worth Fire Department will involve a major change in the organizational culture. The intent of this research is to determine how the Fort Worth Fire Department compares to other departments in sick leave usage and to explore ways of fostering change within the Fort Worth culture that will significantly reduce sick leave usage and the associated problems that come with it. This research is relevant to the Strategic Management of Change course in that it uses

the Change Management Model as a guide to implementing change within the Fort Worth Fire Department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“A community problem exist when a considerable number of people identify a condition that must be changed” (Brody, 1982 pg. 17). For the fire service community a major problem appears to be that of excessive absenteeism. It is a phenomenon that has plagued many fire departments for a number of years and continues to plague them today.

Fire fighting remains one of the most hazardous occupations in the United States today. “During the past 20 years, life expectancy of the firefighter has decreased. The number one killer seems to be heart attacks due to stress” (Fellers, 1997 pg. 7). According to Sadgrove “Stress at work accounts for 90 million lost working days in the United Kingdom” (Sadgrove, 1996 pg. 183). Firefighters are continuously exposed to high stress environments as well as disaster situations. This continuous exposure to disaster type events may contribute to sick leave use by firefighters. A study conducted by Are Holen indicates that disaster situations can have a dramatic impact “demonstrating the lasting effects of catastrophic stress” (Holen, 1990 pg. 84) on those involved. Stress can be a major factor in the use of sick leave for those who experience catastrophic situations. In referring to the effects of disasters, Holens (1990) study indicates that “the mean number of weeks sick leave per year per person was above four times higher for survivors” (pg. 84) as compared to those unaffected by the disaster. “Thus, it seems likely that the heightened level of General Morbidity in wake of the disaster may be explained

by stress reactions rather than by any direct physical damage during the event” (Holen, 1990).

In addition to the job related stress that firefighters face, “cancer rates among firefighters are reported to be 100 to 300 percent higher than any occupation” (Healy, 1988 pg. 12). This statistic appears to be relevant to Fort Worth’s sick leave problem considering the high number of retirement aged employees who have or have had cancer.

Another important factor of sick leave use may be related to shift work that is common throughout the fire service. “It is well known that a great percentage of shift workers complain of far more health and social problems” (McBride and Westfall, 1992 pg. 26). The twenty-four hour work shift that is common in the fire service can lead to exhaustion, a feeling of isolation from their family and a multitude of other problems for the firefighter. “Common complaints their doctors, counselors, and supervisors hear are in the areas of sleep, health, mood, family, financial condition, and general attitude” (McBride and Westfall, 1992) In light of this information and due to other demands placed on firefighters, it would be reasonable to expect that firefighters would use a high percentage of sick leave hours throughout their career.

For whatever the cause, there can be no disputing the fact that absenteeism has a major financial impact on most organizations. “Benefits are as important to some employees as salary levels, and for good reason” (ICMA, 1994 pg.4). One of the most common benefits provided to employees is paid sick leave (ICMA, 1994). According to

the Statistical Abstract of the United States, fifty percent of all people employed in the US receive paid sick leave (US Department of Commerce, 1996 pg. 431). The excessive use or abuse of these benefits though, can create problems for most organizations. “Sick leave effects can be devastating to a fire agency (Burkell, 1985 pg. 29). In the United States “employee absenteeism is estimated to cost workers (and the economy) \$20 billion a year in lost pay alone, and cost employers \$10 billion a year in sick pay” (Cascio, 1982 pg. 45). “ In the public sector, the cost of employee absenteeism is generally passed to tax payers” (Sapp and Carter, 1991 pg. 1). The impact of absenteeism on the Fort Worth Fire Department and the tax payers of Fort Worth can be easily documented. In 1997, the Fort Worth Fire Department overspent its overtime budget by fifty-six percent due largely to excessive absenteeism.

Like Fort Worth, many fire departments throughout the United States still wrestle with the issue of sick leave abuse and the effect of that abuse on the departments’ budget. Under state law, Fort Worth firefighters are entitled to use sick leave " if unable to work because of a bona fide illness” (Vernon, 1992 pg.143). Fort Worth’s current sick leave policy is intended “to reduce or eliminate the number of sick leave days used for occurrences other than physician documented illnesses or injuries” (Fort Worth Fire Department, 1998 pg. 1). However, in research conducted for the National Fire Academy, Christopher Haas found “a trend in the number of personnel using greater than eighty-five percent of their accrued sick leave (Hass, 1996 pg. 17). Haas’ study went on to find that “ninety percent of the problem was caused by ten percent of the employees” (Haas, 1996). Traditionally, the fire service has tolerated excessive sick leave use. Today

“ the fire service industry is operating in a world that no longer tolerates tradition at the expense of effectiveness” (NFA, 1996 pg. SM 6-3). Because of the trend towards improving effectiveness and the experiences of many other departments, a major problem for the fire service would appear to be how does an organization create an environment where the employee feels that they gain value by not using sick leave.

“People are the most important resource an organization has” (McNair and Leibfried, 1992 pg. 8). The success of most organizations is dependent on achieving buy in or ownership with the organizational goals from the ultimate stake holder, the employee. “Studies indicate that worker productivity is linked to the satisfaction of such individual concerns” (ICMA, 1994 pg. 290). “ Employers now need to manage the whole working environment, not just equipment or the type of work. Better information, good training, a fair reward system and a concern for people will minimize the risk of absenteeism, ill health and industrial disputes” (Sadgrove, 1996 pg. 184). “Employers seek to influence workers orientations to their task by the allocation and distribution of rewards ranging from money to esteem” (Dwyer, 1991 pg. 99). In the study conducted by Haas, “results clearly indicated a reduction in the sick leave use by organizations with annual monetary incentive programs” (Haas, 1996). Many experts will argue that “motivating employees is not only a function of compensation. Recognition for a job well done can be an important motivator, and not necessarily an expensive one” (ICMA, 1994).

This research is concerned with finding applicable incentive programs that will help reduce Fort Worth's sick leave usage. The literature review has influenced this research by providing relevant background information relating to absenteeism in other organizations. As reflected by the information gathered in this literature review, many organizations have implemented reward programs to combat the absenteeism problem with varying degrees of success. "Such programs are useful for formally acknowledging significant accomplishments, especially as they span a long period. Formal rewards can lend credibility to more spontaneous, informal rewards used daily by managers in an organization" (Nelson, 1994 pg. 159). According to Aitchison "the employer desires to establish incentive for employees to use sick leave only when actually ill" (Aitchison, 1994 pg. 75). Rewards or incentives offered by many fire departments include sick leave buy back programs, additional vacation days, perfect attendance awards, and a host of other incentives to lower sick leave use. Many of these incentives may have value within the Fort Worth Fire Department. The question that still confronts the fire service and in particular, the Fort Worth Fire Department, is what combination of reward and management policy enforcement will be most successful in reducing sick leave use for your particular department?

PROCEDURES

This research was conducted in Fort Worth, Texas, a city of approximately 490,000 people. The Fort Worth Fire department is a paid department currently consisting of 715 uniformed personnel. The Fire Department has provided paid sick leave for all uniformed

employees since 1940. In recent years the department has come under increased pressure by the city managers office to reduce its sick leave use along with the associated overtime cost of sick leave use. The purpose of this study is to analyze the Fort Worth Fire Departments sick leave use history, compare it to the average usage of similar fire departments and to identify strategies that may reduce sick leave usage within the Fort Worth Fire Department.

Research began with a literature review conducted at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) in June of 1998. Further literature reviews were conducted at the Cleburne Public Library in Cleburne Texas, the Fort Worth Public Library in Fort Worth Texas, the City of Fort Worth Resource Center, and the Fort Worth Fire Department Resource Center.

The literature review focused on identifying sick leave related issues in the fire service, identifying absentee trends in the US, reviewing incentive programs, and determining organizational conditions and norms to evaluate the Fort Worth Fire Departments sick leave experience and policies. The literature review examined both fire service specific information as well as general information concerning absenteeism.

An external survey instrument was developed to gather information from other fire departments of similar size (Appendix E). The survey questions were based on information gathered during the literature review. Information solicited by the survey

concerned the size of the department, the existence of sick leave incentive programs, if the program was successful, as well as the departments current sick leave use patterns.

The survey was reviewed by a group of randomly selected members of the Fort Worth Fire Department. After the initial review the survey was revised based on input received from the initial review process. After conducting a final review the surveys were mailed to all departments listed in the International Association of Fire Chiefs Metro Section. One hundred and fifty surveys were mailed, of which one hundred and fifteen were returned. The data from the survey was analyzed to determine what the sick leave use norm was for departments of comparable size and whether incentive programs were in use that may be effective in reducing sick leave use in Fort Worth.

Guided by the survey results (Appendix F), information was gathered in September, 1998 from the City of Fort Worth Budget Office, City of Fort Worth Risk Management Department, and the City of Fort Worth Human Resource Department. The purpose of this information was to compare the Fort Worth sick leave experience with the information gathered through the literature review and from the external survey. Information concerning annual budgeted staffing levels, sick leave history, and overtime cost was analyzed to determine the effect of current fire department policy on the departments actual sick leave experience.

In October 1998 an internal survey (Appendix G) was developed based on information gathered from the external survey. This survey was reviewed by a group of

randomly selected members of the Fort Worth Fire Department. After the initial review the survey was revised based on input received from the initial review process. After conducting a final review the six hundred surveys were mailed to Fort Worth firefighters of which three hundred and thirty-three were returned. Results from the internal survey (Appendix H) were compiled and incentive programs were ranked in order of their appeal to Fort Worth firefighters. The purpose of this survey was to identify interest in incentive programs that are currently in use in other departments throughout the United States that may be successful in improving Fort Worth's sick leave experience.

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

While most fire departments provide paid sick leave for their employees, many do not do a good job of tracking sick leave use. This condition limits the amount of accurate sick leave data that is available from many departments including Fort Worth. Another limitation to this research was the way that some survey questions concerning sick leave hours were answered. Some answers requesting sick leave hours were given as sick leave days. In converting days to hours, it is assumed in this research that a day is equal to twelve hours. Additionally, there appears to be a limited amount of current literature published on the subject of absenteeism in general and even less literature relating specifically to the fire service. Literature published prior to 1990 is used in this research and is assumed to be valid.

RESULTS

1. What is the current sick leave use experience within the Fort Worth Fire Department?

Examination of Fort Worth Fire Department leave reports and payroll documents indicate that the department experiences a high rate of sick leave usage. Firefighters in Fort Worth earn 180 hours of sick leave annually. In 1997 the Fort Worth Fire Department experienced sick leave use of 62,280 hours representing fifty-one percent of all sick leave earned in that year.

SICK LEAVE OCCURENCES BY DAY OF THE WEEK

October 1996 through September 1997

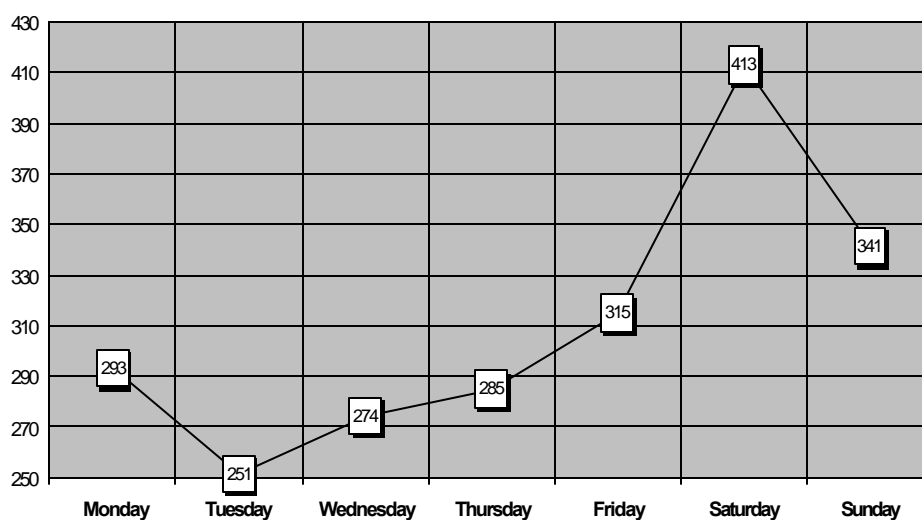


Fig. 1

As shown in figure 1, sick leave records also indicate that firefighters tend to use a greater percentage of sick leave on weekends than on weekdays creating staffing problems and overtime demands on weekends (Appendix I).

TABLE 1.

**PRE-RETIREMENT SICK LEAVE USAGE
OCTOBER 1, 1996 TO PRESENT**

RETIREE	SICK LEAVE USED (MONTHS)
Allcorn	17
Stapleton	10
Griffith	11
Parker	12
Sipes	7
Polson	9
Swaim	20
Hohstadt	7
Ridlehoover	19
Neal	1
Giddens	6
Seckinger	2
Gaines	10
Corley	23
Cox	7
Allison	9
Terry	10
Raulston	8
Williams	6
Robbins	8
Hillard	2
Parker	5
Nunn	3
Griffin	5
Bowers	8

In addition to high weekend use, results indicate that a large percentage of retirement age employees continue to use sick leave at abnormally high rates. Research indicates that employees who retired in 1997 through October of 1998 had used an average of nine months sick leave immediately proceeding their retirement (Table 1).

TABLE 2.

FIRE DEPARTMENT SICK LEAVE HOURS COMPARED TO SELL BACK

YEAR	SICK HOURS USED
1990	82,472.43
1991	75,468.00
1992	63,403.35
1993	79,275.25
1994*	61,976.40
1995	54,753.00
1996	54,723.18
1997	62,280.09
*First year of vacation sell back program	

Study of sick leave records do indicate however, that the vacation sell back incentive program established in 1994 has had a positive effect on reducing the total number of sick leave hours used within a given year (Table 2). In 1997 total sick leave usage had been reduced by fourteen percent compared to usage prior to the implementation of this program. In addition to reducing the number of sick hours that are used in a given year, the vacation sell back also reduced the number of vacation days that were available to an

employee to use as leave days. By allowing employees to convert vacation days to cash, total leave usage is reduced.

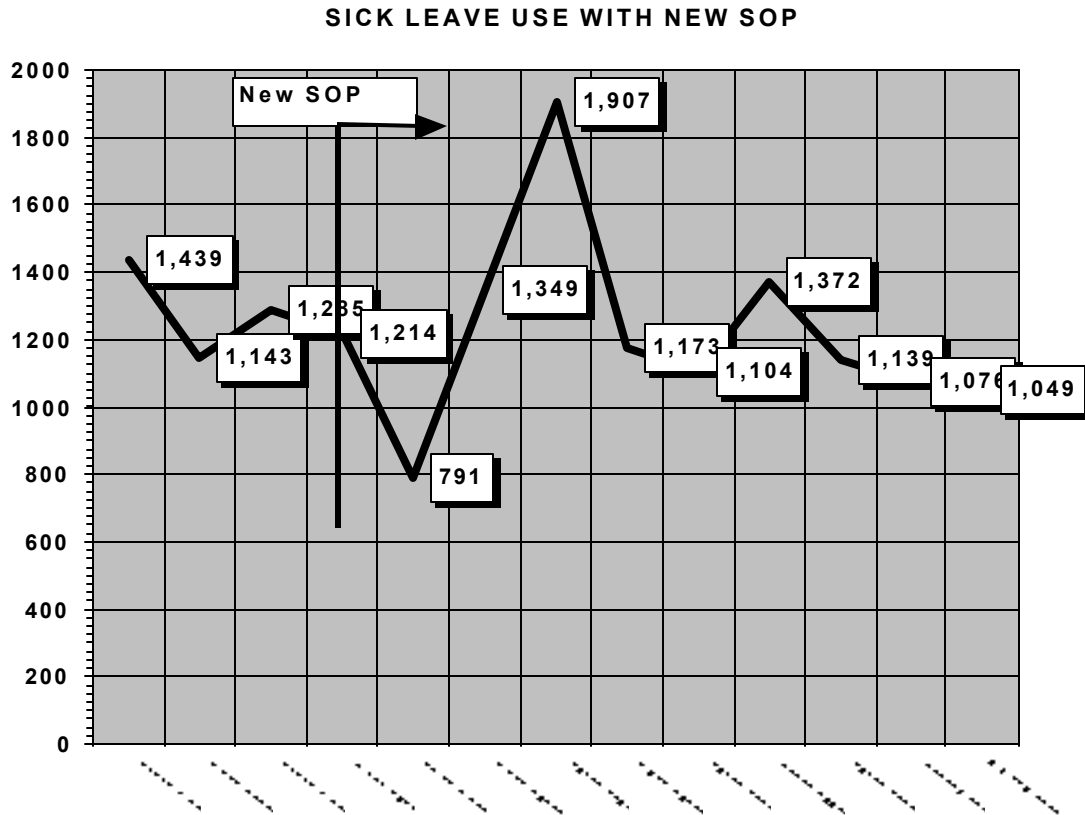


Fig.2

Additionally, the interim revision in the departments sick leave policy allowing overtime opportunities based on limited sick leave use has resulted in moderate success in reducing overall leave use (Fig. 2).

2. How does Fort Worth's usage compare with similar departments?

An external survey of the IAFC Metro Section Fire Departments (Appendix E) was conducted to compare departments of similar size to the Fort Worth Fire Department. The survey results (Appendix F) indicated that one hundred percent of all surveyed cities provide paid sick leave for their employees. On average employees earn two hundred and eight hours of sick leave per year as compared to one hundred and eighty sick leave hours earned by Fort Worth's employees. Survey results also indicate that ninety-five percent of all surveyed cities allow accumulation of sick leave hours from year to year as does Fort Worth.

A comparison was made of sick leave experience comparing sick leave earned in a given year to the actual amount of sick leave used in that same year. Responses for this survey question were broken down into five separate ranges; sick leave use of twenty-five percent or less, use of twenty-six to fifty percent, use of fifty-one to seventy-five percent, use of over seventy-five percent, and those that were undetermined. Results indicated that twenty-four percent of all respondents used twenty-five percent or less of their annual accumulated sick leave. Twenty two percent of all respondents used between twenty-six and fifty percent while eighteen percent used fifty-one percent to seventy-five percent of their annual sick leave accumulation. Only four percent of all respondents indicated that employees used over seventy-five percent of their annual sick leave accumulation. Thirty-two percent of all respondents were unable to determine their sick leave experience. As compared to the survey respondents, Fort Worth's sick leave usage

was fifty-one percent of annual accumulation placing them in the upper twenty-one percent of surveyed cities based on usage.

According to survey results forty-three percent of all respondents indicated that their department provided an incentive program to reduce sick leave usage. Fort Worth however, provides no incentive program. Eighty-four percent of all departments indicated that unused sick leave could be converted to cash through a sick leave sell back program. Many of the respondents that provide sick leave sell back programs indicated that there were limits or restrictions on the amount of time that could be sold back. Of those departments with sick leave sell back programs fourteen percent sold back on an annual basis, fifty-seven percent were allowed to sell back only upon retirement while twenty-nine percent could do both. Fort Worth employees can sell back up to one thousand and eighty hours of unused sick leave only upon retirement as allowed by state law.

Of those departments that had an incentive program, sixteen percent indicated that sick leave usage was reduced by twenty-five percent or less. Twenty-two percent of those with incentive programs indicated that sick leave usage was reduced between twenty-six and fifty percent while sixty-two percent of the respondents could not determine effectiveness of their program. No department with a sick leave incentive program indicated resistance to the implementation of their program.

3. What strategies are employed by other departments to reduce sick leave usage?

The external survey results indicated a variety of incentive programs that are employed by fire departments to reduce sick leave usage. Incentive programs identified include converting sick leave to vacation days to reward perfect attendance, converting sick leave to cash that is placed in the employees deferred comp plan, using accrued sick leave to reach retirement eligibility, using accrued sick leave as years of service to enhance pension benefits upon retirement, converting a limited number of sick days to cash each year, and selling back all or part of accrued sick leave upon retirement.

4. What strategies could be employed to reduce sick leave use within the Fort Worth Fire Department?

Based on the external survey of the IAFC Metro Section Fire Departments, an internal survey of Fort Worth Fire Department employees (Appendix G) was conducted to determine the level of interest in the incentive programs that were being used by similar cities. Three hundred and thirty-three surveys were returned out of six hundred that were distributed. Results from this survey (Appendix H) indicated that thirty-eight percent of all respondents rated using accrued sick leave to reach retirement eligibility as most favorable. Twenty-three percent rated selling back up to fifty percent of all sick leave upon retirement as most favorable. Nine percent of all respondents rated converting two shifts of sick leave to cash each year as most favorable while four percent rated sick leave converted to cash for a deferred comp plan as most favorable. Thirteen percent of all respondents rated converting two shifts

of sick leave to vacation each year as most favorable. The remaining thirteen percent of respondents were not interested in any of the options.

Of all of the options presented it appears that using accrued sick leave to reach retirement and selling up to fifty percent of all sick leave upon retirement hold the most promise of being successful in reducing sick leave usage in Fort Worth.

DISCUSSION

“A community problem exist when a considerable number of people identify a condition that must be changed” (Brody, 1982 pg. 17). For the Fort Worth fire service community that community problem stems from the effects of excessive sick leave usage upon the fire departments overtime budget. For several years the City Manager’s office and the Fire Chief have recognized this problem but resolving the problem has not been an easy task.

“Sick leave effects can be devastating to a fire agency (Burkell, 1985 pg. 29). Research indicated that the city of Fort Worth spent over 1.1 million dollars on overtime in 1997 to provide staffing in the operations division alone. This resulted in overtime expenditures exceeding the overtime budget for that division by over one hundred and eight thousand dollars. Study of fire department records indicated that sick leave usage was a major factor in overtime expenditures for that year. “ In the public sector, the cost of employee absenteeism is generally passed to tax payers” (Sapp and Carter, 1991 pg. 1). As indicated by this research, sick leave usage

continues to burden the fire departments overtime budget and ultimately the taxpayers of Fort Worth.

Resolving the absenteeism problem in Fort Worth has not been a simple matter. As indicated by comments on the internal survey, firefighters generally believe that sick leave is a benefit that they have earned and that they should be allowed to use as they choose. Benefits, including sick leave, are important to Fort Worth firefighters. “Benefits are as important to some employees as salary levels, and for good reason” (ICMA, 1994 pg.4). One of the most common benefits provided to employees is paid sick leave (ICMA, 1994). According to the Statistical Abstract of the United States, fifty percent of all people employed in the US receive paid sick leave (US Department of Commerce, 1996 pg. 431). Research supports the idea that benefits are important for the Fort Worth Fire Department as well as the fire service in general. One hundred percent of all external survey respondents indicated that their department provided paid sick leave for their employees. Results of the external survey conducted during this research also indicated that forty-three percent of all respondents had established incentive programs to reduce sick leave usage. This data further supports the idea that sick leave usage can have a negative effect on departmental budgets and that finding ways to reduce excessive leave is a concern for many fire service managers.

Incentive programs can have a positive effect on sick leave usage. Eighty one percent of those departments with an incentive program indicated that their program

was successful in reducing sick leave usage. Additionally, research indicated that Fort Worth's vacation sell back program has been successful in reducing sick leave usage within the department as well as the policy change of linking overtime opportunities to sick leave usage. Additionally, eighty seven percent of the internal survey respondents in this study indicated an interest in an incentive program.

Based on this information, it would seem probable that a sick leave incentive program would be effective in reducing sick leave usage in the Fort Worth Fire Department.

Other studies have suggested that incentive programs can be successful. In the study conducted by Haas, "results clearly indicated a reduction in the sick leave use by organizations with annual monetary incentive programs" (Haas, 1996). For Fort Worth, it appears that implementation of a successful incentive program could have a positive impact upon on the organizations budget as well as the morale of the departments personnel.

"People are the most important resource an organization has" (McNair and Leibfried, 1992 pg. 8). The Fort Worth Fire Department expends a considerable amount of resources on training and equipping its personnel to safely and efficiently perform their duties. These duties can not be efficiently carried out if employees are absent from work. It makes sense organizationally that a municipality would receive greater benefit from its investment in personnel if sick leave use could be reduced. This research indicates that many departments throughout the US are taking progressive steps to reduce sick leave usage by implementing incentive programs.

Not every incentive program has been successful but this study indicates that a majority of the programs implemented are.

“The fire service industry is operating in a world that no longer tolerates tradition at the expense of effectiveness” (NFA, 1996 pg. SM 6-3). Our tradition of high absenteeism must be changed to reflect the expectations of our customers, the taxpayers. Bringing excessive sick leave usage under control would be a major step in accomplishing that goal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Historically the Fort Worth Fire Departments has experienced high sick leave usage and the associated problems that accompany its use. Like Fort Worth though, many fire departments throughout the United States have or have had similar experiences. Research has shown that even though excessive sick leave use is not uncommon in the fire service, strategies do exist that can reduce its use. Based on the information gathered through this study the following recommendations should be pursued by the Fort Worth Fire Department.

1. The most pressing concern for Fort Worth is the use it or lose it mentality that has become part of the organizational culture. This is especially true for retirement age employees. In an effort to change that culture by adding value to accrued sick leave, a

joint labor/management committee should be formed to explore incentive programs that are mutually beneficial to the employee and the department.

2. Research indicated that Fort Worth was negligent in its monitoring and enforcement of its written sick leave policy. It is recommended that the department create written policies that clearly define responsibilities and assign accountability for managing sick leave use within the department. Mechanisms should be included in the policy that requires continuous monitoring and review.
3. One of the difficulties in managing a leave program in Fort Worth has been the lack of accurate and timely records. It is recommended that Fort Worth implement a leave tracking system that provides for accurate and timely information to be used by managers to monitor leave usage.

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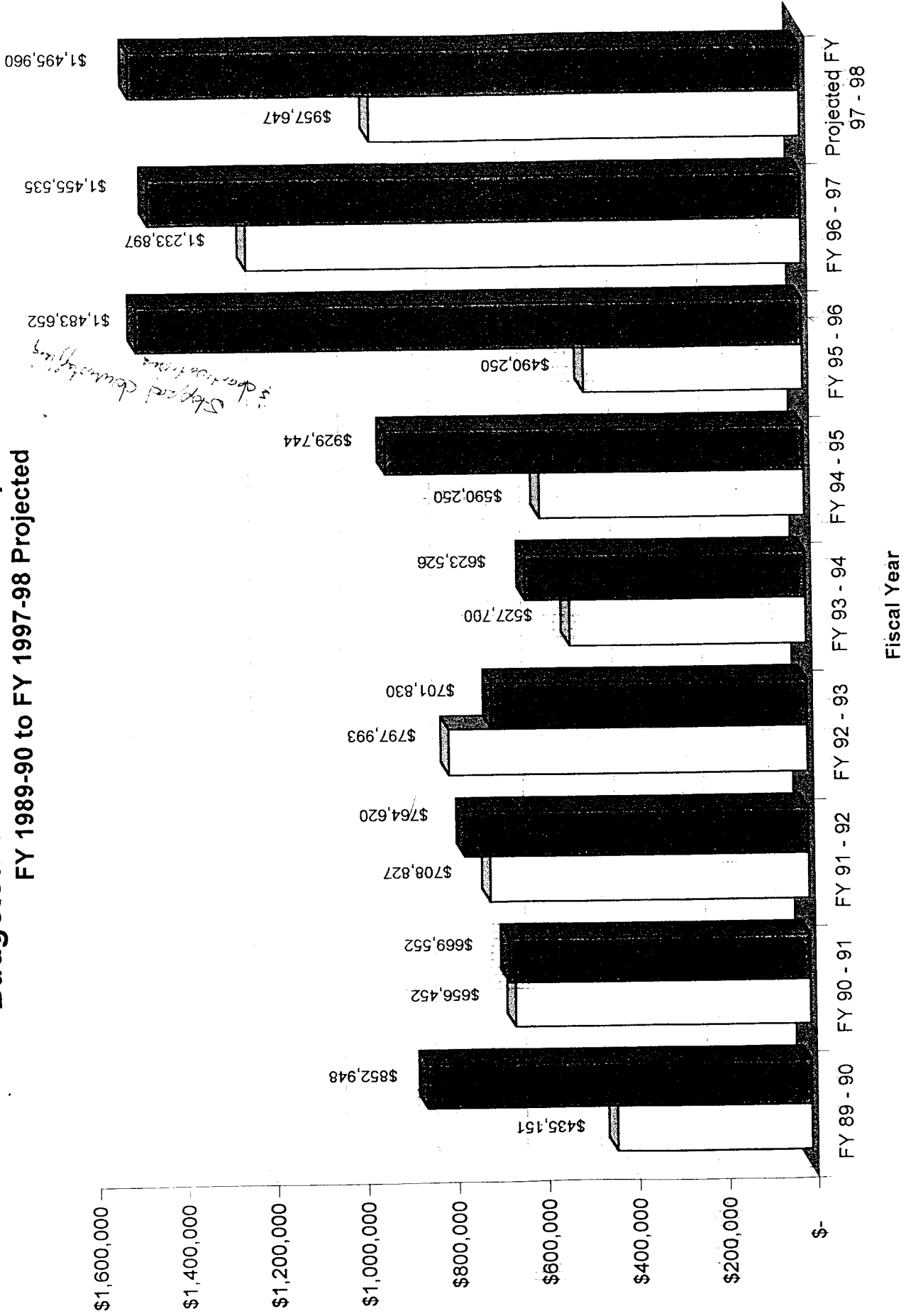
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Fort Worth Fire Department

Budgeted Overtime vs. Actual Expenditures

FY 1989-90 to FY 1997-98 Projected



☐ Budgeted Overtime
 ☒ Actual Overtime

APPENDIX B

CITY OF FORT WORTH		PERSONNEL REGULATIONS		SECTION	I
SUBJECT CIVIL SERVICE FIRE LEAVE SELL BACK		REVISION NO.		NUMBER	21
		EFFECTIVE DATE 11-18-94		PAGE 1	OF 2
DATE APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL 11-18-94		APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER <i>Bob Terrell</i>			

1.0 Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish provisions of a program to reward Firefighters who do not use sick leave excessively.

2.0 Departments Affected:

Sworn officers in the Fire Departments.

3.0 Policy:

Firefighters will be permitted to sell back annually, up to 60 hours (Fire Operations) or 40 hours for all other sworn positions, of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave based on their usage of sick leave. Sell back of Accrued Holidays or Vacation Leave shall not count as any required amount of time off as specified in Personnel Regulation I.3 Vacation.

4.0 Procedure:

- 4.1 A Firefighter in Fire Operations working an average 56 hour work week will be able to sell back up to 60 hours of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave on an annual basis, based on their sick leave usage as shown in Table A of this regulation.
- 4.2 A Firefighter working an average 40 hour work week will be able to sell back up to 40 hours of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave on an annual basis, based on their sick leave usage as shown in Table B of this regulation.
- 4.3 Eligibility for sell back of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave will be based on sick leave usage in a fiscal year, which will be calculated from the first full pay period to the last full pay period of the fiscal year.
- 4.4 A Firefighter may sell back either accrued holidays or vacation leave or a combination of both.
- 4.5 Once each calendar year Firefighters may request payment in lieu of 60/40 hours of Accrued Holidays or Vacation Leave. Requests for payment in lieu of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave may be made if the employee has sufficient hours of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave.
- 4.6 Request for payment in lieu of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave shall be made on forms provided and will be submitted by the employee to the appropriate Time Clerk on or before November 15 of each year.
- 4.7 Time Clerks shall enter the request for payment in lieu of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave on the proper form as prescribed by the Personnel Department such that the payment will be made on the first regular pay check in December at the rate of pay in effect at the time of payment. Appropriate deductions for income tax, Medicare tax and retirement shall be made.

CITY OF FORT WORTH		PERSONNEL REGULATIONS		SECTION	I
SUBJECT CIVIL SERVICE FIRE LEAVE SELL BACK		REVISION NO.		NUMBER	21
		EFFECTIVE DATE 11-18-94		PAGE 2	OF 2
DATE APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL 11-18-94		APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER <i>Bob T. Smith</i>			

TABLE A.

Eligibility for sell back of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave for Firefighters who work an average 56 hour work week in Fire Operations.

In Firefighter uses days of sick leave.	Firefighter may sell back hours of Accrued Holidays or Vacation Leave.
--	--

0 - 2 (24 hours)	60
3 - 4 (48 hours)	54
5 - 6 (72 hours)	36
More than 6	0

TABLE B.

Eligibility for sell back of Accrued Holidays/Vacation Leave for Firefighters who work an average 40 hour work week in Fire Operations.

In Firefighter uses days of sick leave.	Firefighter may sell back hours of Accrued Holidays or Vacation Leave.
--	--

0 - 2 (16 hours)	40
3 - 4 (32 hours)	32
5 - 6 (48 hours)	24
More than 6	0

APPENDIX C

Human Resources Department

Date: January 9, 1998
To: Bob Terrell, City Manager
From: Linda C. Nelson, Human Resources Director
Re: Firefighter Sick Leave



As you know, the Fort Worth Firefighters' Association has requested that firefighters be paid for all of their accumulated sick leave at the time of retirement. The City's current policy is to compensate firefighters for 1080 hours (90 – 12-hour days). The Association's justification is that this would save the City a significant amount of overtime expense, since many firefighters go out of sick leave prior to retirement, to use up the sick leave they will not be paid for.

I have reviewed the current practices in the Fire Department relative to management of sick leave time of firefighters who are close to retirement and discovered:

- It is an accepted practice for firefighters to "use their sick time before retiring" (see copy of memo dated July 5, 1997 from Christine Williams-Allums to Peggy Lawrence).
- Of the twenty (20) firefighters off using their sick time before retiring, none (0) had any medical documentation in any files in the Fire Department.
- I spoke with Jim Tidwell and Hugo Esparza, who informed me that I would probably not find any documentation.
- Captain LaJeune, who does the firefighters' time and attendance each pay period, told Peggy Lawrence that rarely, if ever, do the firefighters submit any medical documentation.
- One firefighter (Alan Nunn) who won the lottery in November has been off on sick leave since he won the lottery, while he is figuring out what to do with the money from the lottery. (Nunn will be quitting at the end of January. Should we address his use of sick leave before he leaves, i.e., charge his recent time off to vacation).
- In trying to determine whether any of these firefighters were working second jobs, I discovered that no Secondary Employment Request forms were in their files. I am working through another source to determine if they have second jobs, so I could verify whether they are working such jobs while off on sick leave.

It seems clear to me that there is currently no attempt in the Fire Department to manage sick leave usage of employees close to retirement. I reviewed sick leave/major medical leave balances of all employees who retired in 1997 and discovered that Police civil service employees and general employees left almost or more than double the amount of time on the books when they retired and used significantly less time in the one year before retirement, than did Fire civil service employees:

	Average Number of Hours Left "On the Books" Per Retired Employee (1997)	Sick Leave/Major Medical Used from January 1996 to Date of Retirement
Police Civil Service	1756	10 out of 17 used an average of 35 hours
General	1235	14 out of 70 used an average of average of 388 hours
Fire Civil Service	674	19 out of 22 used average of 629 hours

Some of the firefighters may be so ill that being off work prior to retirement is appropriate. But the mind-set of the Fire Department seems to be that the accumulated sick leave is an entitlement and that "anyone who has been a firefighter for 20-30 years is bound to have something wrong with them that justifies being off work." However, the fact that the Association is requesting (and at least on the surface has the support of Fire Administration) that firefighters be paid for the sick leave instead of using it before retiring would indicate that the firefighters could be working up to the date of their retirement.

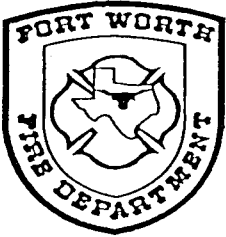
I am strongly opposed to paying firefighters for any of their sick leave over and above the 90 days we already pay them. Such a situation would not be fair to all other employees and would be rewarding firefighters for abusing sick leave (i.e., using sick leave when they do not need to). I would recommend that we develop an overall program to control the use of sick leave in the Fire Department prior to retirement:

- Get buy-in from Fire Administration that they will establish and enforce control procedures
- Enforce basic procedures already in place as part of City regulations or Fire Department SOP's (medical forms turned in; no working second jobs while off; etc.)
- Evaluate whether we can invoke Chapter 143.081 if a firefighter is off on sick leave (Ch. 143.081 is the provision that allows the Chief who questions the physical ability of a Firefighter to perform the job to require that the firefighter present a statement from his/her physician; if the Chief still questions the firefighter's physical capability, the firefighter is required to go to a board of three physicians appointed by the Commission.)
- Evaluate whether we can establish more stringent requirements for use of sick leave if the employee is near retirement, keeping in mind Chapter 143 provisions

I would be glad to meet with you on this issue.

cc: Libby Watson, Assistant City Manager
Charles Boswell, Assistant City Manager
H. L. McMillen, Fire Chief

APPENDIX D



H. L. McMILLEN
FIRE CHIEF

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

TITLE: PERSONNEL, CIVIL SERVICE INJURY/ILLNESS LEAVE

NUMBER: S 1401 R7

EFFECTIVE: JULY 15, 1998

REPLACES: S 1401 R6 (06-01-98)

Purpose: To establish procedures for using sick leave, family illness leave, occupational injury/illness time, and extended illness time. To reduce or eliminate the number of sick leave and family illness leave days used for occurrences other than physician documented injuries or illnesses as described in Chapter 143 of the Texas Local Government Code.

Definitions:

Physician documented illness or injury: An employee is unable to report for or remain on duty and a physician has been consulted. A written release or statement from the physician or appropriate documentation will be required within seven (7) calendar days from the occurrence if the sick or family leave is to be considered physician documented.

Appropriate documentation: A completed Designation of Duty Form with the physician's signature, a doctor's office receipt including the patient's name and date of visit, a copy of a prescription receipt including the name of the patient and date the prescription was filled, a written statement from a school nurse, or a written doctor's statement confirming contact by the patient shall meet the requirements of "a written release or statement from the physician or appropriate documentation" as required by this policy.

In cases where an employee reports to duty and the Battalion Chief/Section Supervisor determines that the employee is too ill to work, the Battalion Chief will send the employee home and complete the F.D. 006 for the ill employee. This F.D. 006 will constitute acceptable documentation and shall be placed in the employee's personnel file.

Required documentation for a death in the family shall be a completed F.D. 006 form containing the following information:

- A. Name of the relative
- B. Time and place of the funeral (if arrangements have been made)
- C. Relationship of the deceased to the employee

Completion of the F.D. 006 form shall be the responsibility of the officer taking the call in situations concerning a death in the family.

Occurrence: Use of sick or family illness leave for a consecutive period of time up to one full shift or work day or for an unlimited continuous use of time beyond a single shift or work day provided the leave time use is for a physician documented injury or illness.

A "Skip" as referred to in this policy shall be defined as two (2) work days. Work days are 12 hours for 56-hour personnel or either 8 or 10 hours for 40-hour personnel.

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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE S1401 R7
PERSONNEL, CIVIL SERVICE INJURY/ILLNESS LEAVE
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General Information:

I. Sick Leave:

- A. Sick leave is defined as that time used by an employee as a result of an off-duty injury or illness which prevents the employee from performing his/her usual job duties.
- B. Sick leave shall accumulate but will not be available to an employee until six (6) months following his/her date of hire.
- C. Sick leave may be used for an employee's medical, dental, or ocular appointments, but not for his/her family's appointments.
- D. Sick leave accumulates as follows:
 - 1. 56-Hour Personnel - 6.93 hours per pay period with no limit on total accumulation.
 - 2. 40-Hour Personnel - 4.62 hours per pay period with no limit on total accumulation.
- E. Sick leave is administered in accordance with City of Fort Worth P.R. I-2.

II. Family Illness Leave:

- A. Family illness is defined as those emergency situations where it is imperative that the employee attend to the needs of an immediate family member until other reasonable levels of care can be arranged.
- B. Immediate family is defined as wife, husband, mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandson, granddaughter, stepmother, stepfather, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, grandmother, and grandfather.
- C. After one year of continuous service, Civil Service employees are eligible to use family illness leave.

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D. Family illness leave is awarded as follows:

<u>YEARS SERVICE</u>	<u>8-HOUR DAY 40-HOUR WEEK</u>	<u>12-HOUR DAY 56-HOUR WEEK</u>
1	56 Hours	84 Hours
5	40 Hours	60 Hours
10	32 Hours	48 Hours
15	16 Hours	24 Hours
20	0 Hours	0 Hours

E. Family illness leave is non-accruable. On the last day of the "payroll year" (last day of Pay Period #26), any unused leave is deleted from the records. On the first day of the "payroll year" (first day of Pay Period #1), family illness leave is awarded as outlined above.

F. Employees who need more than the allotted family illness leave must use vacation, earned compensatory time, or earned holiday time. Leave time used under these circumstances shall be documented as family illness and shall apply to limits and procedures specified in this policy.

G. Family illness leave is administered in accordance with City of Fort Worth P.R. I-15.

III. Occupational Injury/Illness:

A. An occupational injury/illness is defined as an injury/illness sustained by an employee in the course and scope of his/her job performance.

B. Occupational injuries/illnesses must be immediately reported to the employee's supervisor.

C. The Occupational Injury Program is administered in accordance with City of Fort Worth P.R. F-5.

IV. Reports:

A. Reports which are required or may be required by this publication:

1. Leave Request, form F.D. 006.
2. City of Fort Worth Designation of Duty Status of Employees form.
3. Designation of Duty Status Supplement, form F.D. 008.
4. Reassignment to Fire Operations, form F.D. 007.
5. Employer's First Report of Injury or Illness, form TWCC1.
6. Employer's Supplemental Report of Injury.

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B. Additional forms which may be required as a result of illness or injury:

1. Light Duty Assignment, form F.D. 018.
2. Notification of Personnel Changes, form F.D. 014.

V. Forms:

A. Copies of all forms will be maintained in Division files.

VI. Compliance:

A. Failure to comply with the provisions of this Standard Operating Procedure may result in the employee being placed in a "No-Pay" status until compliance is acquired.

Instructions/Procedures:

I. Sick/Family Illness Leave:

A. Policy:

1. The first occurrence of sick leave or family illness leave without physician's documentation will begin the time measurement for monitoring further leave usage. If an employee has another occurrence of sick or family illness leave without physician's documentation within 365 days of the first occurrence, the employee will be skipped on his/her next due overtime shift. Each subsequent use of sick or family illness leave without physician documentation while in the no overtime status will result in an additional overtime "skip" for the employee. Employees in the no overtime status will be ineligible to work voluntary overtime of any nature. Once an employee has received all "skips," he/she shall be eligible to work overtime again. Upon the next occurrence of sick or family illness leave without physician documentation, a new 365-day monitoring period shall begin.

Station officers and Battalion Chiefs shall be responsible for tracking and reporting sick and family illness leave usage.

Battalion Chiefs shall be responsible for maintaining attendance records for all employees under their command. Battalion Chiefs shall maintain copies of all written releases and/or physician statements for all employees under their command. It shall be the responsibility of the Battalion Chief to notify the Shift Technician of the no overtime status of employees. Battalion Chiefs shall notify the Shift Technician immediately after the 7-day period has passed and no documentation has been provided by the employee. Shift Technicians shall be responsible for notifying the Battalion Chief when an employee is once again eligible to work overtime. The Battalion Chief is responsible for notifying the affected employee.

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2. Specified Absences. A Designation of Duty Status is required from 56-hour employees that are absent two (2) or more consecutive twenty-four (24) hour shifts, and from 40-hour employees that are absent three (3) or more consecutive 8-hour shifts. In addition, a Designation of Duty Status may be required by the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief or Division Manager at his/her discretion.
3. If a 56/40-hour employee uses 96/60 hours or more of sick leave, family illness, or a combination of both within one calendar year, he or she shall provide a completed duty status for each additional use of sick leave or family illness for one full year from the day of using the 96th/60th hour. This rule shall apply regardless of whether the injury or illness was physician documented. This rule may be waived by the appropriate Deputy Chief or the Fire Chief if an employee is off on a documented injury or illness for an extended period of time.

B. Employees shall:

1. Notify their immediate supervisor by 0715 hours (56-hour workers) or prior to the beginning of the workday/shift (40-hour workers) of their intent to use sick or family illness leave under the guidelines established by P.R. I-2 and this SOP.
 - a. In the absence of the immediate supervisor, the employee shall call the following personnel in order until contact is made and the absence can be reported:
 - (1) The employee's Battalion Chief/Section Supervisor
 - (2) Deputy Chief (Shift Technician)/Division Manager
 - (3) Fire Alarm Office (FAO) Supervisor (It will then be the responsibility of FAO supervisor to make proper contact with appropriate Battalion Chief and report absence of firefighter that called.)
2. Upon return to work, submit a completed Leave Report, form F.D. 006, to their immediate supervisor no later than 0830 hours.
3. Submit additional reports as requested by supervisors/superiors.

C. Immediate supervisors shall:

1. Record leave time used by each employee on their Personnel Record, form F.D. 001, and the Daily Log, form F.D. 721 (56-hour workers), or on the Time and Attendance Worksheet, form F.D. 049, and on the Time and Attendance Report (40-hour workers).
2. Notify the next higher level supervisor of employee absences.
3. Upon employee's return to work, ensure form F.D. 006 is properly completed and

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forwarded to the Battalion Chief no later than 1000 hours. The supervisor must notify the Battalion Chief when the F.D. 006 form is completed (no later than 1000 hours), and the Battalion Chief shall decide the best way of forwarding the F.D. 006 form to the battalion headquarters.

4. Ensure other reports requested by higher authority are completed and submitted in a timely manner.

D. Battalion Chief/Section Supervisor shall:

1. Monitor use of sick/family illness leave by employees under his/her command/supervision.
2. Notify Deputy Chief/Division Manager when employees appear to be using an unreasonable amount of sick leave and take appropriate action with the employee.
3. Ensure compliance with the 96-hour rule as outlined in this policy (Section I.A.3.).
4. Record use of leave usage on the Payroll Report, form F.D. 050.
5. Ensure form F.D. 006 and other reports as required are completed and filed at the battalion headquarters in a timely manner.
6. Notify Shift Technician of any change in the overtime status of employees.

E. Deputy Chiefs/Division Managers shall:

1. Monitor use of sick/family illness leave by personnel under his/her command/supervision.
2. Coordinate with Battalion Chiefs/equivalent or Fire Chief concerning unreasonable use of sick leave, and determine the need for additional measures.
3. Ensure correct recording of leave usage on the Time and Attendance Report.
4. Review form F.D. 006 and forward it to the Fire Chief only when final approval/disapproval at that level is deemed appropriate.
5. Ensure that corrections to the Time and Attendance Report are made if use of sick/family illness leave is disapproved.
6. Ensure all required reports are completed and submitted in a timely manner.

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II. Occupational Injury/Illness:

A. Policy:

1. All completed forms, reports and other documents pertaining to occupational injuries/illnesses are forwarded to the Workers' Compensation Clerk (WCC) in the Operations office at Fire Administration.
 - a. Completed forms, reports, etc. must be delivered to the WCC no later than the morning of the next business day following the employee's injury or follow-up visit to his/her doctor.
 - b. Forwarding completed forms, reports, etc. to the WCC by mail is unacceptable.
2. No employee shall be reported on Time and Attendance reports as occupational (O) unless all applicable forms specified herein have been submitted. The employee shall be classified in a No-Pay status until all forms are submitted.
3. No employee shall be allowed to return to work until all applicable forms specified herein have been submitted. The employee shall be classified in a No-Pay status until all forms are submitted.
4. Employees returning to active duty shall not report for such duty until the date specified by their physician.
5. An employee's willful failure to report for re-examination as directed by their physician shall result in the employee being placed in a No-Pay status.
6. An employee's willful failure to report to any prescribed therapy as directed by their physician shall result in the employee being placed in a No-Pay status.
7. An employee consistently reporting late for any prescribed therapy as directed by their physician, or failing to remain at therapy sessions for the prescribed length of time, shall be placed in a No-Pay status.
8. Designation of Duty Status forms for vacation relief personnel shall be handled by the Battalion Chief in charge of the battalion to which they are assigned.
9. The Battalion Chief or Division Manager shall be responsible for correct and timely reports to the Personnel Office.
10. Failure to comply with all reporting requirements as specified herein may result in the employee being placed in a No-Pay status until all deficiencies are corrected.

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B. Employees shall:

1. Immediately notify their supervisor of any occupational injuries or illnesses.
 - a. If the employee is unable to personally contact his or her supervisor, someone must be designated to do so on his/her behalf.
2. Assist their supervisor in completing required reports.
3. Request the examining physician complete a Designation of Duty Status for each examination/treatment resulting from the occupational injury or illness.
 - a. Submit a Designation of Duty Status following each visit to the physician every 30 days from the date of the first report until he/she returns to work.
 - b. The 30-day requirement may be extended by the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief/Division Manager if a thorough review of the details of the injury and treatment indicates a follow-up examination will not occur within the 30-day time frame.
4. Contact their supervisor at least every six (6) calendar days for 56-hour workers or every five (5) days for 40-hour workers.
 - a. If the employee is unable to personally contact his or her supervisor, someone must be designated to do so on his/her behalf.
5. Submit a Designation of Duty Status upon request by the Fire Chief or Deputy Chief/Division Manager.
6. Submit a Designation of Duty Status prior to returning to unrestricted duty, or Designation of Duty Status prior to returning to restricted duty.
7. If returning to Fire Operations after an absence of more than 90 days, complete the requirements of SOP 1402, as revised, "Reassignment to Fire Operations," form F.D. 007; to be cleared by supervisors from the areas/sections listed on the form.

C. Supervisors shall:

1. Complete Employer's First Report of Injury or Illness, form TWCC1.
 - a. Ensure the completed TWCC1 is received by Fire Administration no later than the morning of the next business day following the injury or illness.

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2. Ensure the completed Designation of Duty Status form and supplement, if appropriate, are received by the WCC not later than the morning of the next business day after the employee is examined by a physician (if examined). These forms should accompany the TWCC1 and supplement whenever possible.
3. Ensure all required reports are completed and submitted through channels in a timely manner.
4. Record documented occupational injury/illness time on the employee's Personnel Record, form F.D. 001, the Daily Log, form F.D. 721 (56-hour workers), and on the Time and Attendance Report (40-hour workers).

D. Battalions shall:

1. Record documented occupational injury/illness time on the Payroll Report, form F.D. 050.
2. Ensure all required reports are completed and submitted to the Fire Operations Office in a timely manner.

E. Deputy Chiefs/Division Managers shall:

1. Ensure correct recording of documented occupational injury/illness time on the Time and Attendance Report.
2. Ensure all required reports are completed and submitted to the WCC in a timely manner.

III. Extended Illness:

A. Policy:

1. An employee will be placed in an extended leave category when he or she experiences any non-work-related illness or injury in which a physician documents that a 56-hour employee will be unable to work for a period of 240 or more consecutive hours, or a 40-hour employee is unable to work for a period of 160 or more consecutive hours.
2. Designation of Duty Status forms are required every 30 days following the date of the initial duty status form. These forms shall be provided to the employee's Deputy Chief/Division Manager.

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3. In the absence of physician documentation of extended leave, a 56-hour employee using 240 consecutive hours of sick leave, or a 40-hour employee using 160 consecutive hours of sick leave will automatically be placed in the extended leave category.
4. Failure to provide Designation of Duty Status forms by the required deadlines will result in the employee being placed in a No-Pay status until the deficiency is corrected.
5. Notice to place an employee in a No-Pay status due to deficiencies in following this SOP shall be provided to the Administrative Services Manager by the employee's Deputy Chief/Division Manager.
6. Notice to reinstate an employee from a No-Pay to a regular pay category shall be provided to the Administrative Services Manager by the employee's Deputy Chief/Division Manager.

B. Employees shall:

1. Provide his or her Deputy Chief/Division Manager a Designation of Duty Status form immediately following a physician determination that the employee is unable to work for a period of at least 240 or more consecutive hours (160 or more consecutive hours for 40-hour employees).
2. Provide his or her Deputy Chief/Division Manager a Designation of Duty Status form every 30 days following the date of the initial duty status form.
3. In the absence of physician documentation of extended leave, provide his or her Deputy Chief/Division Manager a Designation of Duty Status form immediately following the employee's use of his or her 240th consecutive hour of sick leave (160th hour of sick leave for 40-hour employees).

C. Deputy Chiefs/Division Managers shall:

1. Forward all Designation of Duty Status forms to the Administrative Services Manager. All forms will be filed in the employee's personnel file.

References: City of Fort Worth Personnel Regulations, F-4, F-5, I-2, I-15.



H. L. McMILLEN
FIRE CHIEF

Acknowledgment: I have read and I understand this publication:

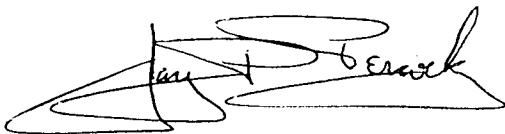
PLEASE ACKNOWLEDGE ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS PAGE.

APPENDIX E

Dear Fire Service Professional,

As part of the Executive Fire Officer Program, I am in the process of evaluating the effects of incentive programs upon sick leave usage. As a major source of information for this research project I am conducting a survey of major fire departments throughout the United States. The purpose of the survey is to determine what incentive programs are being used in the fire service today and to determine what approaches may be applicable to the Fort Worth Fire Department.

Please take a few moments to complete the survey and return it to me by August 31, 1998. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this research project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay D. Peacock", with a stylized, overlapping loop structure.

Jay D. Peacock

Technical Operations Chief

Fort Worth Fire Department

1000 Throckmorton

Fort Worth, TX 76102

Fax: (817) 871-8591

Name of Department _____

Number of Personnel _____

Population Served _____

Sick Leave Survey

1. Does your department provide paid sick leave for its' employees?
2. How many hours of paid sick leave do employees earn annually?
3. Does unused sick leave accumulate from year to year?
4. On average, what percentage of total sick leave earned in a given year is used in that year?
5. Does your Department provide incentive programs to reduce sick leave usage?
(Please List)
6. Are your employees allowed to sell back unused sick leave?
7. Is unused sick leave sold back annually, upon retirement , or a combination of both?
8. Has your incentive program been successful in reducing sick leave usage?
9. By what percent has sick leave usage been reduced in your department after implementation of your incentive program?
10. Was there resistance to the implementation of your incentive program? Describe.

APPENDIX F

External Survey Report

Survey Question	Replies	Fort Worth
1. Does your department provide paid sick leave for its employees?	100%	Yes
2. How many hours of paid sick leave do employees earn annually?	208.5 average	180
3. Does unused sick leave accumulate from year to year?	Yes - 95% No - 5%	Yes
4. On average, what percentage of total sick leave earned in a given year is used in that year?	25% or less - 24% respondents 26-50% - 22% respondents 51-75% - 18% respondents Undetermined - 4% respondents	51%
5. Does your Department provide incentive programs to reduce sick leave usage?	Yes - 43% No - 57%	No
6. Are your employees allowed to sell back unused sick leave?	Yes - 84%/ No - 16%	Yes
7. Is unused sick leave sold back annually, upon retirement, or a combination of both?	Annual-14% Retirement-57% Combo-29%	Retirement
8. Has your incentive program been successful in reducing sick leave usage?	Yes - 81% No - 19%	N/A
9. By what percentage has sick leave usage been reduced in your Department after implementation of your incentive program?	25% or less - 16% 26-50% - 22% Undetermined - 62%	N/A
10. Was there resistance to the implementation of your incentive program?	Yes-0% No-100%	N/A

APPENDIX G

Sick Leave Incentive Program Survey

To: All Personnel
From: Jay D. Peacock
Technical Operations Chief
Date: October 24, 1998

As part of a research project for the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy, I am conducting a survey on employee interest in incentive programs to reduce sick leave usage. Listed below are incentive programs that are currently in use in other fire departments throughout the United States. Please take a moment to rank these incentive programs from most appealing to least appealing to you as an individual. It is important that you complete the entire survey including your years of service with this department. Your name or any other identification information is **not** necessary. Surveys must be returned by November 2, 1998 and survey results will be made available to department members upon request. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Years of service: Circle the correct range

Less than 1 1 to 5 6 to 10 11 to 15 16 to 20 21 to 25 26 to 30 over 30

Rank from 1 (highest interest) to 5 (lowest interest)

Do not use a number (1-5) more than once.

- _____ For employees who use no sick leave (excused or un-excused) within a fiscal year, convert two shifts of sick leave to vacation days that can be banked or used beginning with the next fiscal year.
- _____ Convert two shifts of sick leave to cash to be placed in the employees deferred comp fund provided no sick leave (excused or un-excused) was used in that fiscal year.
- _____ Convert two shifts of sick leave to cash at the end of the fiscal year provided no sick leave (excused or un-excused) was used in that fiscal year.
- _____ Sell back up to 50% of all accrued sick leave upon retirement based on the percentage of sick leave used through out your career.
- _____ Add banked sick leave towards years of service to reach 80 retirement points for the purpose of early retirement.
- _____ I am not interested in any of the options above.

APPENDIX H

Internal Survey Report

Question	Respondents Ranking Question as Highest Interest
For employees who use no sick leave (excused or un-excused) within a fiscal year, convert two shifts of sick leave to vacation days that can be banked or used beginning with the next fiscal year.	13%
Convert two shifts of sick leave to cash to be placed in the employees deferred comp fund provided no sick leave (excused or un-excused) was used in that fiscal year.	4%
Convert two shifts of sick leave to cash at the end of the fiscal year provided no sick leave (excused or un-excused) was used in that fiscal year.	9%
Sell back up to 50% of all accrued sick leave upon retirement based on the percentage of sick leave used throughout the year	23%
Add banked sick leave towards years of service to reach 80 retirement points for the purpose of early retirement.	38%
I am not interested in any of the options above.	13%

APPENDIX I

Fort Worth Fire Department
Operations Division
Overtime Used For Fulfilling Staffing Requirements Sorted by Day of Week
Jan 97 - Aug 97

